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CRITICAL NOTES

ON SOME POINTS, DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL, IN THE CATECHETICAL LECTURES OF ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

The writer of a paper on the catechetical lectures of St. Cyril is fortunately relieved from the necessity of discussing the troubles that befell their author during his agitated and harassed episcopate, thrice tossed, as he was, into exile, and often maligned and misunderstood, though finally vindicated and graced with the title of Saint. For the lectures were delivered while he was yet in priest's orders as a young man of some three and thirty years. It is as a presbyter that we listen to him.

Cyril was born about the year 315, apparently of Christian parents, in Jerusalem or its neighborhood. He was ordained deacon by Macarius, the bishop of that see about 335, and priest about 345 by Maximus, whom he succeeded as bishop in 350. He died in 386.

The first eighteen lectures were delivered on week-day evenings in Lent of the year 348 in the Church of the Golgotha, or Martyrium of the Holy Cross; and the five mystagogic discourses at noon during Easter week in the *Anástasis*, or Church of the Holy Sepulchre—all within the precincts of Constantine's elaborate constructions on the holy sites which had been unearthed by his mother, Helena, in 328.

The *competentes* whom he addressed were adults, men and women, but grouped separately in the basilica. They gave in their names, were questioned and examined as to their past life, made confession of their sins, were exorcized or breathed upon, and went about with faces veiled. The exorcisms seem to have been repeated before each catechizing. After enrolment, their instruction in the faith began, forty days before Easter, the lectures being continued at intervals till the week before Palm Sunday. Immediately before Easter the details of the baptismal rite were explained to them (xviii. 32), but this lecture is not given in the extant course. They were baptized and received their first communion on Easter Eve, and then further instructions, on the doctrine and rites of baptism, chrism, and the Eucharist, followed during Easter week.

Cyril spoke in a popular and flowing style, now and then distinguished by poetic figures and rhetorical hyperbole. His knowledge of Scripture

was full and minute—almost every paragraph is illuminated and illustrated by a biblical citation. And if some of these quotations are applied mistakenly or unhistorically, we must remember two things: first, that there was, and is, no one authoritative traditional Catholic exposition of isolated texts of Scripture; the Catholic use of Scripture concerns itself with doctrines, not with interpretations; and, secondly, that the early church read the Bible for edification, and individual students of it often saw illustrations of the doctrinal truths they held, even where they did not really exist. On the other hand, we, in the light of increased knowledge, can discern useful proofs which they overlooked, or were unable to appreciate owing to want of literary or scientific experience. Cyril's use of different illustrative texts does not profess to be traditional. His interpretations are adaptations, or, as Paley would call them, "accommodations" of language, like many of St. Paul's Old Testament quotations, witnessing to the great principle of the "ever-living intelligence, deep and varied meaning, and inexhaustible fulness of Holy Scripture" (Newman, *Lib. Fath.*, xx).

The course of the lectures was well planned out, so that Cyril can tell his hearers that if they miss one they will imperil the completeness of their instruction.

I think my best plan will be to touch upon certain outstanding teachings that arise in the lectures, grouping them under the headings of points of doctrine and points of ritual and practice.

I. *Points of doctrine.*—The first general remark to be made is that Cyril insists with great emphasis upon the fact that the Christian doctrines are essentially scriptural (iv. 17), for he says:

Do not believe me because I tell you these things, unless you receive from Holy Scripture the proof of what is declared. This salvation, which is of our Faith, is not by ingenious reasonings, but by proof from the Holy Scriptures. . . . For concerning the divine and sacred mysteries of the Faith, we ought not to deliver even the most casual remark without the Holy Scriptures.

Cyril is sound on the doctrine of the atonement: "One only is sinless, Jesus Who purgeth our sins" (ii. 10).

On the question of the *ῥημοσύσιον* we know that for many years Cyril shrank from its use, preferring the formula *ὁμοιον κατὰ πάντα*, "like in all things." But his teaching embraced all that the *ῥημοσύσιον* stood for. He speaks of the Son of God as "eternally begotten, by an inscrutable and incomprehensible generation" (xi. 4). "The Father, being Very God, begat the Son like to Himself, Very God." The Father was never

without the Son (xi. 8 f.). Athanasius himself could not wish for more explicit teaching, and indeed Athanasius himself was by no means wedded to the use of the word *ῥημοσύσιον*. In the whole of his four orations against the Arians it occurs only once (i. 9), and once only in his *Expositio Fidei* (2), though more frequently in some of his other treatises. This is at least a reminder to us not to judge harshly the faith of other people when their phraseology does not exactly coincide with our own. Their *πίστις* may be sound, even though their mode of expression of it may lack technical accuracy.

The "resurrection of the dead" is the form of words which Cyril evidently prefers, though the "resurrection of the flesh" was the expression of this truth which stood in the Jerusalem Creed. He argues for the resurrection from the usual and familiar analogies in nature, and also, in common with other Fathers, from the story of the phoenix (xviii. 3). The existence of the phoenix was part of the ordinary belief of the time, shared by the most intelligent and learned heathen writers—Tacitus, Aelian, Celsus, Philostratus—and, as such, it was naturally appealed to by Clement of Rome, Tertullian, Epiphanius, and others, much as our forefathers believed in the four elements and the motion of the sun around the earth. We know now that the origin of the phoenix fable was purely astronomical, the Egyptian hieroglyph for the phoenix-period of five hundred years being a date-palm (*φοῖνιξ*), which stood for the world-era ushering in a "resurrection" or "restitution of all things." Cyril speaks of there being no inherent difficulty in the idea of flesh being restored to flesh, and dwells, after St. Paul's manner, on the resurrection of the body—not the same body, but a spiritual one—and interprets the clause "resurrection of the flesh" as quite obviously and naturally meaning "resurrection of the dead," i.e., an eternal continuance of life after death (xxiii. 28).

At this point one may note Cyril's views as to the Canon of Holy Scripture. He accepted all our books of the Old Testament *plus* Baruch; and in the New Testament all except the Apocalypse; receiving seven Catholic epistles—James, two by St. Peter, three by St. John, and Jude—and reckoning the "Hebrews" as Pauline. Here he followed the general usage of the Greek church. He carefully cautions his hearers to be content with these, and on no account to read "spurious" works either of the Old Testament or of the New Testament. "What is not read in Church, that do not read by thyself" (iv. 33 ff.).

One is struck throughout the lectures by the extraordinary pains Cyril takes to confute the Jews, and to put counter-arguments into the

hands of his hearers that will enable them to refute Jewish slanders and Jewish evasions of the meaning, plain or obscure, of their own prophecies. The Jews were naturally strong in numbers and an influence in Palestine, and especially in Jerusalem—a fact which was emphasized some twelve years later in their frantic efforts to assist in the abortive attempt under Julian to rebuild the Temple.

Let me pass now to the question of the Creed of the mother-church of Christendom. One of the most interesting results of the study of these lectures is that, although in accordance with the *disciplina arcani* of the age, the formal and exact verbal transcription of the Creed is not given, we are enabled to learn what were the clauses that it contained. This is the more important because the Jerusalem Creed formed the foundation of that Imperial and Constantinopolitan recension of the Creed which nearly the whole of Christendom recites today in the liturgy under the misnomer of “Nicene.” It is true that Professor Lebedeff, of Moscow, has recently (see *J. Th. St.* iv. 285) termed the early Jerusalem Creed thus extracted from the lectures “merely the ingenious composition of modern scholars”; but it is obvious that such a Creed existed, otherwise Cyril could not have lectured upon it; and equally obvious that its phrases can be deduced from these lectures without any great exercise of ingenuity, for some of them are expressly stated by Cyril to be those of the Creed. We may affirm then without any hesitation that the early Creed of Jerusalem was cast in the following form:

We believe in One God the Father Almighty,
 Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible:
 And in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Only begotten Son of God,
 Very God, begotten of the Father before all worlds,
 Through Whom all things were made,
 Who became Flesh, and was made Man,
 Was crucified and buried,
 Rose the third day,
 And ascended into the heavens,
 And sat down on the right hand of the Father,
 And is coming again in glory to judge quick and dead,
 Whose kingdom shall have no end:
 And in One Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,
 Who spake by the prophets:
 And in One Baptism of Repentance for the Remission of sins:
 And in One Holy Catholic Church:
 And in the Resurrection of the Flesh:
 And in Life Eternal.

Our knowledge, as a rule, of the exact forms of local symbols is very imperfect, partly because of the dislike of church teachers to give in consecutive order the words of their baptismal symbol, and partly because the importance gained by conciliar creeds pushed the others into the background; but in the case of the Creed of the mother-church of Christendom this is happily not so. We owe our knowledge of it, however, solely to these lectures of St. Cyril.

The *disciplina arcani* seems to us very extraordinarily unnecessary and unpractical. "Tell nothing to a stranger," says Cyril (*Procat.* 12). The catechumens were not permitted to learn what the *competentes* were taught, nor were the latter allowed to write the Creed down, but only to commit it to memory (v. 12). At the head of his lectures Cyril solemnly warns his readers, after the lectures had been published—if one may use such an expression: at any rate, after they had been taken down in writing and circulated—to allow only candidates for baptism and baptized believers to read them; "thou mayest by no means put them into the hands of catechumens, nor of any others who are not Christians, as thou shalt answer to the Lord. And if thou takest a copy of them, write this prohibition in the beginning, as in the sight of the Lord." Very strange does this sound in view of what one imagines must have happened after Nicaea, when creeds were handed about and freely discussed. Nor does this notion as to the secrecy with which Christian truth was guarded agree with what ecclesiastical historians tell us of heathens present in Nicaea out of curiosity as to the Christian belief (Soz. i. 18), and of familiar and colloquial bandying of sacred subjects and questions in the market-places and in the theaters, such as Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Eusebius complained of. Eusebius, (*V.C.* ii. 61) tells us that "solemn matters of divine teaching were subjected to the basest mockery in the very theatres of the heathen." Athanasius (*Or. c. Ar.* i. 7) speaks of boys in the streets and women being questioned on points of doctrine. Socrates says (ii. 2), "The chamberlains in the palace discuss doctrine with the women, and in the family of every citizen there is a logical contest." But the most remarkable testimony is that of Gregory of Nyssa:

Men of yesterday, mere mechanics, offhand dogmatists in theology, servants and slaves that have been flogged, are serious and philosophical with us about matters incomprehensible. The whole city is full of such—clothes-vendors, money-lenders, victuallers. Ask about pence, and he will discuss the Generate and the Ingenerate; inquire the price of bread, he answers Greater is the Father, and the Son is subject; mention that you would like a bath, and he defines that the Son is out of nothing (ii. 898).

Yet in spite of all this, the theory of the *disciplina arcani* persisted at least till the time of Augustine, and indeed later (Council of Orange, Canon 19, 441 A.D.)¹

It is of importance to notice that, before beginning his detailed exposition of the articles of belief, Cyril imparted to his hearers a large body of church teaching on the subjects of the Being of God, Christ, the incarnation, the virgin-birth, the cross, the burial, the resurrection, the ascension, the future judgment, the Holy Spirit, the soul of man, his freedom of will, his body, marriage, food, fasting, dress, the resurrection of the body, the laver of baptism, and Holy Scripture (iv). This teaching naturally varied in its form and language. But after this the candidates were taught orally the exact words of the Creed, which were to be committed to memory and, as I have said, neither to be written down nor recited in the presence of the unbaptized (v. 12).

Before I pass to the points of ritual and practice there are two matters upon which I ought to touch. The first is Cyril's well-known references to the wood of the cross. There are three passages in which he speaks of it, and I will quote them in full, as it may be that they have been misunderstood.

a) "Christ was crucified for our sins truly; shouldest thou be disposed to deny it, the very place which all can see refutes thee, even this blessed Golgotha, in which, on account of Him Who was crucified on it, we are now assembled; and further the whole world is filled with the portions of the wood of the Cross" (iv. 10).

b) Again, speaking of the many witnesses to Christ, Cyril enumerates *inter alia* the manger, Egypt, the Jordan, the winds rebuked, the five loaves, and adds, "The holy wood of the Cross is His witness, which is seen amongst us to this day, and by means of those who have *in faith* taken thereof, has from this place now almost filled the whole world" (x. 19).

c) Once more: "For though I should now deny His crucifixion, this Golgotha confutes me . . . the wood of the Cross confutes me, which has from hence been distributed piecemeal to all the world" (xiii. 4).

Surely there is something very rhetorical in these passages. Is it possible that Cyril used the phrase "the wood of the Cross" metaphorically for faith in Christ's Atonement, or for Christianity itself, which had

¹The theory of the *disciplina arcani* was probably based on the Jewish distinction of certain esoteric literature (or apocrypha) which was more highly treasured than the canonical Scriptures. It could never have been more than a well-recognized and strongly supported convention. See Charles, *Apocr. and pseudepigr.*, I, p. viii; Batiffol, "L'Arcane," *Études d'histoire et de théologie positive* (1902).

spread almost throughout the known world? What does he mean by "those who have *in faith* taken thereof"? Neither Eusebius nor Constantine (Euseb. *V.C.* iii. 28, 30) speaks of any other discovery, at the time of the empress Helena's excavations, beyond the site of the Holy Sepulcher. That was in 328, when Cyril was a boy of thirteen. It is almost incredible that within twenty years there should have grown up a belief that the Cross had been found, and that it should have been distributed piecemeal throughout the world. Pilgrimages to Jerusalem were not so common then as in later times. As a matter of fact it is not until about 394 that Chrysostom gives us the first form of the story of the discovery of three crosses, with the *titulus* attached to the middle one—a story which was amplified and embroidered, doubtless in good faith, by Ambrose and Sulpicius, Rufinus, Socrates, and others in the fifth century. If, however, you prefer to think that Cyril did really believe that the true cross had been discovered, you will probably wish to add that the sifting of evidence as to matters of fact was not his strong point. In any case his language is not innocent of some exaggeration.

The other point I wish to touch upon illustrates Cyril's methods of exegesis, and, besides, is interesting for its own sake. I refer to his interpretation of the symbolism of the water and the blood which issued from the Savior's pierced side (iii. 10; xiii. 21). In speaking of the necessity of baptism, he says:

Unless a man receive Baptism, he hath not salvation; except martyrs only, who even without the water receive the kingdom. For the Saviour Who redeemed the world through the Cross, when His Side was pierced, gave forth blood and water; that in times of peace men should be baptized with water, in times of persecution with their own blood. (Cf. Tertullian *De bapt.* 16.)

In another lecture he speaks differently:

The beginning of signs under Moses was blood and water, and the last of all Jesus's signs was the same. Moses began by changing the river into blood, and Jesus at the end gave forth from His Side water with blood. This was perhaps on account of the two speeches, his who judged Him, and theirs who cried out against Him; or because of the believers and the unbelievers. For Pilate said, I am innocent, and washed his hands in water; they who cried out against Him said, His blood be on us. There came therefore these two out of His Side: the water perhaps for him who judged Him, but for them that shouted against Him, the blood. And again it is to be understood in another way. The blood was for the Jews: the water for the Christians; for upon the Jews as conspirators is the sentence of condemnation by the blood; but to thee who now believest, the salvation which is by water. For nothing happened without a meaning. Our fathers who have written comments have given

another reason of this matter. For since in the Gospel the power of salutary Baptism is twofold, that namely, by means of water bestowed on the illuminated, and that to holy martyrs in persecutions through their own blood, there came out of that salutary Side blood and water, to ratify the gift to confession made for Christ, whether in illumination or on occasions of martyrdom.

He adds characteristically:

There is something besides meant by the Side. The woman who was formed from the side led the way to sin; but Jesus Who came to bestow the grace of pardon on men and women alike, was pierced in the Side for women that He might undo the sin.

II. *Points of ritual and practice.*—

1. First, the ritual of the baptismal rite: The candidates assembled in the outer hall of the baptistery, and there, barefoot and clothed only in a tunic (χιτών), facing the west, they stretched forth the hand and made their renunciation: "I renounce thee, Satan, and all thy works and all thy pomp, and all thy service." They then turned to the East and made their confession of faith in the words of the early Baptismal Creed of Jerusalem: "I believe in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Ghost, and in one Baptism of repentance." Entering then into the inner chamber they stripped off their tunics and were anointed all over with exorcised oil. The water in the "holy pool" (ἁγία κολυμβήθρα) was sanctified by "the Invocation of the Holy Ghost, and of Christ, and of the Father." Standing on the edge of the font, a second confession of faith in the Holy Trinity was made, and then came the trine immersion, a triple descent beneath the saving waters, pointing (Cyril says) to the three days' burial of Christ. The actual baptism was immediately succeeded by the chrism or unction with holy ointment on forehead, eyes, nostrils, and breast, carrying with it the gift of the Holy Spirit. He says:

Beware of supposing this to be plain ointment. For as the Bread of the Eucharist, after the Invocation of the Holy Ghost, is mere bread no longer, but the Body of Christ, so also this Holy Ointment is no more simple ointment, nor as one might say, common, after the Invocation, but the *charisma* of Christ, and is made effectual to impart the Holy Ghost by the Presence of His Own Godhead. It is symbolically applied to thy forehead and thy other senses; and while thy body is anointed with visible ointment, thy soul is sanctified by the Holy and Life-creating Spirit.

The "illuminated ones" now put on white robes, symbolical of baptismal innocence, which were worn throughout the Easter octave. Thus clad they proceeded into the great Church of the Resurrection, being

welcomed in the words of the Thirty-second Psalm, and admitted to their first communion.

2. The ritual of the Eucharist can be gathered in all its salient features from Cyril's mystagogic lectures, though not, of course, in full detail. In the *Missa Catechumenorum* we read of the Lections, and the Gospel, and the Sermon, with its text and its final doxology. In the *Missa Fidelium* we find the *Lavabo*, followed by the Kiss of Peace. We may infer from the citation of St. Matthew, vss. 23 f., about bringing the gift to the Altar, that here followed the Offertory (xxiii. 3). Then came that most ancient and invariable section of the liturgy beginning with the Anaphora (cf. Cyprian, 252, A.D. *Deorat. dom.* 31), the Preface, and Triumphal Hymn. Then followed the Epiclesis, the Great Intercession for the quick and dead, which included one clause particularly interesting to us just now—"for our soldiers and allies"—and the Pater-noster. Then came the Elevation with the words *Tà ἅγια τοῖς ἁγίοις*, to which the people responded, "One is Holy, One is the Lord, Jesus Christ." The Invitation to Communion was sung by a chanter in the words of Psalm 34:8, "O taste and see how gracious the Lord is." Then the reception of the Body of Christ, "the left hand a throne for the right," touching the eyes with the sacred particle, being careful not to let a crumb fall, and responding "Amen." Then the Chalice, bowing before it in reverence, and with the same response. "And while the moisture is still upon thy lips, touching it with thine hands, hallow both thine eyes and brow and the other senses." The liturgy concluded with the Thanksgiving and Blessing.

One other detail of daily or hourly practice calls for notice. In two passages, reminiscent, I think, of Tertullian (*De coron.* 3, 202 A.D.), Cyril urges the use of the sign of the cross. "Let us not then be ashamed of the Cross of Christ; but though another hide it, do thou openly seal it on thy brow, that the devils beholding that princely sign, may flee far away trembling. Make thou this sign when thou eatest and drinkest, sittest or liest down, risest up, speakest, walkest: in a word, on every occasion; for He Who was here crucified, is above in the heavens" (iv. 14). And again:

Be the Cross our seal, made with boldness by our fingers on our brow, and in everything—over the bread we eat and the cups we drink, in our comings in and goings out, before our sleep, when we lie down and when we awake, when we are in the way and when we are still. Great is that preservative; it is without price, for the poor's sake; without toil, for the sick; since its grace is from God (xiii. 36).

I conclude: there is a splendid breadth in Cyril's outlook, a wide horizon, which we might do well to cultivate. After all his explicit directions toward the truth and antidotes against error, he is constrained to conclude with these words:

The ways of finding Eternal Life are many, though I have passed over them by reason of their number. For God in His loving kindness has opened, not one or two only, but many doors by which to enter into the Life everlasting, that as far as lay in Him, all might enjoy it without hindrance . . . which may we all, both teachers and hearers, by God's grace enjoy (xviii. 31).

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CORRECTION

Professor C. C. Torrey of Yale was kind enough to call the attention of the writer to an erroneous statement and an argument based thereon in the *American Journal of Theology*, XXI (January, 1917), 94-109. The Arabic of the first sentence in Abulfeda and Ibu Athir may very well bear the meaning: "to be the younger contemporary of," "to be born before someone's death." The writer has no data at hand at the present time to show how early this usage is, but it is certainly early enough for Abulfeda and Ibu Athir. How Galen came to be correlated chronologically with Ptolemy is, of course, another question, which need not and cannot be broached here. For non-Arabists it will be simplest and safest to excise the statement and the arguments deduced therefrom. The argument as a whole will not, the writer believes, be materially affected by this excision.

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